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ABSTRACT

Teacher educators were surveyed about their attitudes toward parent involvement in the schools and their opinions on whether courses in parent involvement training should be included in the preservice curriculum. The respondents to a questionnaire were 575 professors or instructors teaching elementary education courses at four-year colleges. There was general support for the concept of parent involvement at the elementary level. The home and school were seen as important to childrens' development, and a need was discerned for lessening tension between the two environments. Teacher educators viewed appropriate parent involvement as that which gives parents very little authority in making school decisions. The preferred type of involvement was providing training for parents in the areas of discipline, tutoring, overseeing homework, and teaching parents about issues of child development or mental health. In each of these activities, the role of the teacher is basically to inform parents about ways they can improve their parenting skills. Teacher educators believed that teachers need skills in teaching or working with adults and knowledge about specific instructional materials. The implications for teacher education curriculum are discussed. (JD)

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PARENT INVOLVEMENT TRAINING

FOR UNDERGRADUATE ELEMENTARY TEACHER PREPARATION

A Paper Prepared by

John T. Stallworth
and
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for Presentation at the

American Educational Research Association

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PARENT INVOLVEMENT TRAINING
FOR UNDERGRADUATE ELEMENTARY TEACHER PREPARATION

I. INTRODUCTION

In the last decade there has been increased emphasis upon involving parents in the education of their children. Federal legislation has mandated parent involvement in Title I, Head Start, Title VII and other such programs as well as requiring schools to involve parents in the educational planning for children in special education. Legislation in several states has now provided for parent involvement in the public schools by creating Parent Advisory Committees for every school in the state. At the local level, there is an upward spiraling trend of schools beginning to require formal parent/teacher conferences to discuss the progress of each child enrolled. Parents are also taking on a more active role in the education of their children, and their contact with school personnel is rapidly increasing.

From the teachers' perspective, this increased contact with parents has added to the demands traditionally associated with the teacher role. Teachers are now expected to develop skills in working with parents and leadership in working with advisory groups, in addition to the skills which pertain to classroom instruction. Although additional teacher competencies are needed due to the increase of parent involvement, the professional training programs for teachers have generally remained unchanged. The training for teachers has continued to stress classroom teaching skills and has not yet addressed the new skills which teachers may need to work with parents in the schools.

Even though the curriculum of teacher training programs has not changed, professors of education should be aware of changing demands upon elementary teachers and to what extent training experiences are being provided to meet these demands within the context of existing courses. In order to assess the extent to which parent involvement skill training has been formally incorporated into the undergraduate teacher preparation curriculum and to measure the extent to which professors address these skills in existing courses, this project conducted a survey of teacher educators at each of 133 teacher training institutions in the Southwest Educational Development Laboratory's six state region (Arkansas, Louisiana, Mississippi, New Mexico, Oklahoma, and Texas).

This is the first of a series of surveys designed to gather recommendations for changing the teacher preparation curriculum to include parent involvement training (PIT). Each of these surveys focuses on one of the stakeholder groups which has specific knowledge about aspects of the changes in the curriculum: (a) teacher educators who would design and implement changes needed for training teachers to work with parents, (b) teachers in the elementary schools who increasingly have to work with parents, (c) elementary principals who have the responsibility for working with both their own staff of teachers and with parents of children in their schools, and (d) parents who are being asked to learn new ways of becoming involved in their children's education and schools. Each of these groups has its own ideas about the goals of parent involvement and the most appropriate ways of meeting those goals. The purpose of this series of surveys is to gather this information from each stakeholder group and then identify areas of consensus and areas of conflict by comparing the responses of each.

Results from this comparison of responses will be used to develop specific guidelines for training experiences which would enhance parent involvement for each group.

II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

A. Introduction

In the mid-1960's social research provided new evidence concerning the relative impact of the family and other institutions on child development. These studies suggested that family circumstances and the influence of the family were strong enough to outweigh the influence of the schools (Bloom, 1964; Coleman, 1966; Jencks, 1972). As a result of this evidence, new federal programs designed to enhance equal educational opportunity included a mandate to involve parents in the schools (Head Start; ESEA Title I; Follow Through; Bilingual Education). This move toward parent involvement has been augmented by the activities of various advocacy groups seeking greater parent involvement in the education of their children, such as the Council for Exceptional Children and the Association for Children with Learning Disabilities, and The National Committee for Citizens in Education. The impact of social research, federal program regulations or guidelines and community action or advocate groups began to break down the barriers between home and school and to produce innovative ideas about how these two institutions might improve their interaction.

In 1975 the Congress passed the Education for All Handicapped Children Act (P.L. 94-142) which required all public schools to provide a free and appropriate public education to handicapped children and to actively involve parents in developing their individual educational plans. This legislation has produced state and local policies outlining new procedures for assuring

parent involvement in the schools. Although this legislation focused on handicapped children, it has had a "spillover" effect on teachers and administrators by increasing the sheer quantity of their contact with parents. In addition, parents of non-handicapped children have become more aware of their potential power to affect school policy and have demanded to have input into the education of their children.

As a means of ensuring parent involvement on a state-wide basis, three states have also passed legislation requiring public schools to have advisory councils which, for the most part, are made up of parents and/or other community persons. California, Florida, and South Carolina have all passed legislative mandates which describe the duties of such advisory councils as well as requiring that such persons be given a major role. The purpose of this legislation is to increase citizen participation in education and to help schools to improve educational services (Davies and Zerchykov, 1980).

B. The Goals of Parent Involvement

Recent educational research suggests that parent involvement in the schools may help parents by giving them a better understanding of school problems (Filipczak, 1977; Hubbell, 1979), more input into policy decisions (Olmstead, et al, 1979), and new skills in teaching their children (Alden, 1979; Filipczak, 1977; Olmstead, 1979). Other articles suggest that parent involvement may help teachers to raise achievement scores by using parents as home tutors (Rich, et al, 1979) and by enlisting their cooperation with behavior problems (Hobson, 1979). Still other articles suggest that administrators can use parent involvement to improve home/school relations (Schmuck, 1974), to set disciplinary standards (Parker, 1979), to obtain

greater community support for school programs (Hubbell, 1979; Filipczak, 1977), and to gain assistance with the management of the school itself (Parker, 1979). In summary, there are a number of different goals which may be served by involving parents in their children's schools.

C. Barriers to Parent Involvement

In the last ten years a momentum has been building to encourage, mandate and study parent involvement, yet this increased activity has not produced widespread benefits for parents or schools. A variety of explanations have been offered for the limited success of parent involvement in the schools:

Explanations for Lack of Success	Categories
Limited time available to parents or teachers	I, II
Lack of parental interest	II
Teachers feel threatened	II
Parents not taken seriously	II
Lack of acceptance by teachers	II
Lack of administrative welcome in school	I
Lack of communication skills (parents and teachers)	III
Parents feel inadequate	II
Teachers already overburdened	I
Teachers see parents as unqualified	II, III

This list of explanations, compiled at a conference of parents, teachers, and administrators (Sowers, et al, 1980), suggests that the barriers to parent involvement fall into three categories. The first category (I) is that of policies and procedures (federal, state, and local) which provide the context for understanding parent involvement in any specific setting. The second category (II) is that of emotional or attitudinal resistance by parents, teachers, and administrators which shapes the character of compliance with policies and procedures and which must be addressed before examining the problems in the third category. The third category (III) is that of specific skill

deficits on the part of parents, teachers, or administrators which prevent effective parent involvement. This category is mentioned last because it would appear to be futile to attempt to teach these skills unless there was first administrative support for parent involvement and also motivation to learn them. These three categories of problems all seem to be contributing factors to the lack of success of parent involvement.

D. Stakeholders Affected by Parent Involvement

In addition to the three types of problems facing parent involvement, there are also three stakeholder groups who are primarily affected by it: parents, teacher, and administrators. When families and schools are viewed as a system of the two institutions having major responsibility for socialization of children, it is clear that changes in the role of one group will necessarily affect the other (Leichter, 1979). Within this system, the three stakeholder groups are necessarily interdependent. For example, if parents were to share in teaching their children, teachers might have more time for curriculum planning or other activities; if teachers were to meet with parents on advisory councils, administrators might have more time for planining and management; and if administrators were to alter current demands on teacher time, teachers might have more time to meet with individual parents.

The interdependent nature of the stakeholder groups suggests that the problems which impede parent involvement in the schools are systemic. In order to accurately assess a systemic problem it is necessary to survey members of each stakeholder group to determine their particular view of the problem (Leichter, 1979). When information has been gathered from each of the groups, a systemic set of recommendations may be developed which

outlines the specific changes necessary for the system and for each individual group. Unless this systemic approach is used, each of the stakeholder groups will tend to see the other two groups as the real barriers to more effective parent involvement.

E. Types of Parent Involvement Activities

Finally, there is a need to clearly define what is meant by parent involvement in the schools (Filipczak, 1977). Parents may take it to mean either participating in a bake sale or obtaining control of the curriculum. Teachers may envision parents working more with their children at home or parents volunteering to help in the classroom. Administrators may think of parent involvement as schools teaching them parenting skills, parents cooperating with the school in disciplining their children, or parents participating on school advisory committees. In order to get an accurate picture of the problems facing parent involvement, it is first necessary to separate these different definitions of parent involvement in the schools.

One of the more widely accepted definitions of parent involvement was that provided by the late Ira Gordon (Gordon and Breivogel, 1976). He defined parent involvement as:

> ...a form of citizen participation wherein parents receive and transmit information about their children, augment and complement the process of formal education at home and/or at school, contribute to decision making on school related issues and activities, and generally seek to ensure their children's well-being as they experience formal education.

He then discussed various parent involvement activities according to three models: The Family Impact Model, The School Impact Model, and The Community Impact Model. The Family Impact Model includes those activities for which the major goal is to do something to or for the family in order to help the

child in school. Activities under this model are based upon the following assumptions:

that the family wants to help, but doesn't know how
that there are correct ways to raise children
that educators know what these correct ways are
that family behavior will change with knowledge

The assumptions of the Family Impact Model are completely consonant with the assumptions which underlie our educational system as a whole. The School Impact Model includes activities where the focus is upon changing the school. This model is based upon an entirely different set of assumptions, including the following:

that school personnel want to help, but aren't sure how best to do it
that parents can be of assistance in school decisions
that benefit to the children is the common goal of parents and schools
that parents can learn skills necessary in running the schools

The assumptions of this model begin to illustrate the conflict of interests between the family and the school in parent involvement. The School Impact Model threatens the power which teachers and administrators have traditionally held. A third model, the Community Impact Model is emerging to cope with the limitations of the other two. In this model the focus is upon integrating the two subsystems which have the most impact on child development so that their efforts are complementary and integrated (Gordon, 1979). This model is based upon the work of Brim (1975) and Bronfenbrenner (1976) who suggest that both institutions must be viewed within the larger context of the community, as subsystems rather than as separate entities. The assumptions of this model include the following:

that the family is the primary influence on child development
that the school is a major secondary influence

that the common goal is to provide training which will enable children to become productive citizens in the community
that the success of this training depends upon the congruence of values, goals of the family, the school, and the larger community in which they exist

The assumptions of the Community Impact Model point up the importance of parent involvement in the schools, but they avoid placing major responsibility for change on the family. This model takes into account that families and schools are both affected by pressures of a changing society, and focuses on the importance of developing new ways to interact with each other.

This framework of parent involvement activities provides several insights about the field. Parents are likely to resist parent involvement programs which focus on changing the family because they may disagree with assumptions on which they are based. Teachers and administrators are more likely to resist programs which impact the school because of their disagreement with the assumptions of that model. Parents and school personnel may resist programs based upon the community model because of their disagreement with its assumptions.

E. The Focus of This Study

The purpose of this study is to look at parent involvement from the viewpoint of teacher educators and to use this information to develop guidelines which might be used to modify the curriculum for training elementary education teachers. Rutherford and Edgar (1979) have pointed out that parent-teacher relations are frequently missing from the curricular of teacher training programs. Conner and Sanders (1976) stress the importance of having teachers who are trained to assist parents in becoming involved with the schools, and Morrison (1978) predicts the need for such

teachers will continue to increase in the future. Safran (1979) agrees with these authors, but goes a step further in stressing the importance of providing this parent involvement training as part of the undergraduate curriculum rather than depending upon inservice training.

This survey is designed to ask teacher educators about their attitudes toward parent involvement and to ask them whether they also think it is important enough to be included in the already crowded teacher training curriculum.

III. METHODOLOGY

A. The Survey Instrument

The parent involvement training survey is a five-part instrument which explores the attitudes and practices of teacher educators regarding parent involvement training (Appendix A). Part I is a 46-item section which asks for their perceptions of (1) the current state of education, (2) appropriate roles for parents in the schools, (3) the desirability of training teachers in parent involvement, and (4) the barriers to implementing parent involvement or parent involvement training for teachers. Part II consists of seven additional statements, but these seven items all pertain to actually providing parent involvement training for undergraduates in education. In Part III teacher educators were presented with 13 teaching activities used to teach students about parent involvement and they were asked to rate each of the 13 on a scale from one to five, with one indicating that the method is less important and five indicating the method is very important.

In Part IV, the respondents are asked to look at the same 13 teaching activities and to indicate which ones they have actually used in their courses. In Part V, respondents were presented with 19 common decision-making issues

in the schools for which either parents, teachers, or administrators might have responsibility. They were then asked to indicate which of these three groups should have input into the decision, and which should have final authority for making the decision.

The last part of the survey instrument requested demographic information in seven areas: (1) number of years teaching at the college level, (2) number of years taught in public or private schools, (3) primary focus of graduate training, (4) approximate enrollment of present institution where teaching, (5) extent to which parent-teacher relations are a part of your teaching, (6) sex, and (7) ethnic background.

B. The Sample

Using a national directory of colleges and universities, a list was compiled of all the four-year colleges offering undergraduate programs in elementary education in the six-state region. Each college was asked to submit a list of professors or instructors teaching elementary education courses at that institution. Altogether, 133 colleges or universities met the criteria and from these institutions, a total of 980 eligible respondents were identified for the survey. Each of the 980 potential respondents was mailed a questionnaire and a self-addressed return envelope. A total of 575 completed the instruments and returned them. The characteristics of this group of respondents are described in detail in the Results section of this report.

IV. DATA ANALYSIS

The first step in data analysis was to look at the response distribution and mean ratings for each item in Parts I-V and for each demographic variable. Because of the different formats used in each part of the question-

naire, subsequent analyses were slightly different for each section. For Part I, the mean ratings of each item were used to rank order the items in terms of the strength of response. The items were then grouped by whether respondents generally agreed or disagreed with the statement in the item. For Part II, the data analysis was similar to that used in Part I as they both have the same format. In Part III, the mean scores were used to rank order the thirteen (13) teaching activities used to teach about parent involvement in terms of their perceived importance.

In Part IV, where respondents indicated which of the activities they actually used in their teaching, the group responses were rank ordered according to the frequency of response to each item. A visual comparison was made to determine the extent to which the methods considered most important corresponded to those which were most used. On Part V, a frequency distribution was used to get an overall picture of whether parents, teachers, or principals should have input or final authority on each of 19 typical school decisions. Means were also calculated for each of the demographic items, and a frequency distribution was used to describe the respondent group.

V. Results

This section includes a summary of the characteristics of respondents in this study and a description of their responses to Part I through Part V of the survey questionnaire. The results are presented in tables and discussed in the corresponding text.

A. Characteristics of Respondents

Of the 575 respondents, 294 (51%) were teaching at teacher colleges or universities in Texas, with about 10% from each of the other five states

(see Table 1).

TABLE 1

Number of Respondents by State

State	N	Percent of Total
Arkansas	59	10.3%
Louisiana	68	11.8%
Mississippi	58	10.1%
New Mexico	38	6.6%
Oklahoma	58	10.1%
Texas	294	51.1%
TOTAL	575 Respondents	100.0%

The 575 respondents indicated they had been teaching college an average of 3.90 years. They also had taught in the schools an average of 3.76 years. Their graduate training included Curriculum and Instruction (35%) Elementary Education (33.2%), Educational Administration (8.7%), Preschool or Early Childhood Education (8.2%), and Special Education (5.0%). Other disciplines represented in this group included educational psychology, philosophy of education, music, library science, child development, bilingual education, and psychology.

Approximately two-thirds of the group (67%) indicated they currently were teaching at a college with an enrollment of less than 10,000 students. Only about 9.9% taught at colleges or universities with student enrollments of more than 20,000.

From this group, 55.5% of the respondents indicated they included some form of parent-teacher relations in their teaching. Of the 575 respondents,

211 (36.7%) indicated they taught at least one class on the topic, another 84 (14.6%) reported that they taught a module, and 24 (4.2%) indicated they taught a complete course on the topic (4.2%). All together, 55.5% of respondents indicated they taught parent-teacher relations in their courses. Approximately 30.3% of respondents indicated their courses included very little or no emphasis on parent-teacher relations.

In terms of ethnic background, 81.4% indicated they were White, 7.9% Black, 4.9% Hispanic, 1.7% American Indian and .3% Asian. Approximately 46.5% of those responding were male and 53.5% female.

B. Part I of the Questionniare

1. Factor Analysis of Part I Items

When the instrument was designed, the items in Part I were constructed using the following domains: (a) respondents' attitudes toward parents, (b) their perceptions of role of teacher, (c) their impressions regarding the need for training to work with parents, and (d) their views about whether or not this training should become part of the teacher training curriculum.

After collecting the data, a factor analysis was done to look at response patterns on these items. Using a varimax rotation, response patterns emerged which paralleled the item domains. With regard to domain (a) respondents' attitudes toward parents were described by a factor which included Items 5, 16, 23, 25, and 42. Responses to these items were highly correlated with each other, so respondents who agreed with Item 5 (that problems in schools are more the fault of parents than teachers) also agreed with the other 4 items (that parents are being given too many rights over matters which are the concern of educators, that parents are not able

to handle negative feedback about their children from teachers, that parents are unwilling to take time for their children, and that education has problems because parents are not doing their job).

Respondents' perceptions of the role of teachers (domain b) were described by a second factor which included Items 17, 21, 22, and 30. Responses to these items were highly correlated, which means that respondents who agreed with Item 17 (that parenting and family life are private matters, not the business of teachers) also agreed with the other three items (that teachers should only be trained to teach, that teachers have enough to worry about without having to work with parents, and that parent involvement is the responsibility of parents, not teachers). Items 10, 13, 14, 15, and 24 were related to this factor, but not as highly interrelated.

A third factor seemed related to both the perceived need for parent involvement training (domain c, above) and whether it should be included in the teacher training curriculum (domain d). This factor included Items 10, 15, 19, 33 and 40. Those who agreed with Item 10 (that parent involvement training should <u>not</u> be a priority for undertraduage training) also tended to agree that parent involvement training was important enough to allocate some undergraduate training time to it (Item 15), that such training would be good if more time were available (Item 19), that teachers need extra training to work with culturally different parents (Item 33) and that working with parents requires specific training (Item 40). Responses to Item 24 (that parent involvement is another fad which should not be taken seriously) were also positively related to the other items and the responses to Item 45 (that parent involvement training should be

required as part of continuing education) were negatively related to the other items in this factor.

2. Respondents' Ratings of Items on Part I

As a group, teacher educators agreed most strongly with statements that (1) teachers are underpaid, (2) parent participation in all school matters should be increased, (3) teachers need extra training to prepare them for working with parents of different cultural backgrounds, (4) Parent Involvement Training should be included in undergraduate curriculum, (5) parents are usually cooperative with teachers, and (6) parents would help their children at home if they knew what to do. The items with which teacher educators agreed are shown in rank order in Table 2 with strongest agreement at the top.

Respondents disagreed with statements that (1) parents should get more training if they want input into education, (2) low-income families are not interested in their schools, (3) teachers have enough to do without working with parents, and (4) Parent Involvement Training is just another fad in education. They also did not think that parents do more harm than good by helping their children with homework. The items with which they disagreed are shown in rank order in Table 3 with the strongest disagreement at the top.

The remaining items on Part I received mean ratings of between 2.0 and 2.99, which either indicated they were neutral on the item or there was simply no consensus. Secondary analysis of Part I responses provide more information with which to interpret these responses in the middle range. However, a discussion of these analyses is not included in this report.

TABLE 2

Teacher Educators Agree with these Items in Part I*

(n = 575)

	Item	$\bar{x}$ Rating
2.	Public school teachers are underpaid.	1.44
7.	Parent participation in all school related matters should be increased.	1.71
33.	Teachers need extra training to prepare them for working with parents of different cultural and ethnic backgrounds.	1.72
4.	It is possible to train teachers to manage the wide variety of student abilities present in today's classroom.	1.79
19.	If more time were available, I would advocate Parent Involvement Training in undergraduate curriculum.	1.84
29.	It is appropriate for teachers to confer with parents about the child's home life.	1.86
27.	More parents would help children at home if they knew what to do.	1.89
1.	Parents are usually cooperative with teachers.	1.90
15.	Parent Involvement Training is important enough to allocate undergraduate training time to it.	1.93
26.	Teachers are having to absorb more and more of the responsibilities that parents used to assume.	1.97
32.	When given adequate information about their children, parents can make rational decisions.	1.97

*These items received mean ratings of less than 2.0 on a scale from 1 to 4 where 1 = strongly agree; 2 = agree; 3 = disagree; 4 = strongly disagree.

TABLE 3

Teacher Educators Disagree with these Items on Part I*

(n = 575)

	Item	$\bar{x}$ Rating
12.	If parents want to have more input into educational policy and planning, they should go to college and get a degree in education.	3.33
14.	Getting low income families interested in their schools is an unrealistic goal.	3.18
22.	Teachers have enough to worry about without having to work with parents, too.	3.22
24.	Parent Involvement Training is another fad in education; it should not be taken too seriously.	3.15
10.	Training teachers to work with parents should <u>not</u> be a priority for undergraduate training.	3.11
21.	Teachers should be trained to teach; all other school problems should be handled by other professionals.	3.05
36.	The average parent does more harm than good by helping a child with social work.	3.02

*These items received mean ratings of more than 3.0 on a scale from 1 to 4 where 1 = strongly agree; 2 = agree; 3 = disagree; 4 = strongly disagree.

3. Summary of Part I Results

A factor analysis of Part I items identified three factors which seemed to correspond to the domains used to construct the questionnaire, (a) attitude toward parents, (b) perception of teacher role, and (c) need for parent involvement training in the undergraduate curriculum. The respondents as a group indicated clear agreement with 11 of the 46 items and clear disagreement with 7.

C. Respondents' Ratings of Items on Part II

In Part II the respondents were asked to assume that Parent Involvement Training (PIT) had been mandated for all undergraduates in education before rating seven statements about ways to provide such training. These items use the same rating scale as those in Part I. As shown in Table 4, the respondents as a group agreed that systematic inservice on PIT should be available for professors and that PIT should be handled by inservice training for teachers. However, respondents disagreed with statements that PIT should be handled by another department, or that students might be too immature to benefit from it.

D. Part III of the Questionnaire

1. Respondents' Ratings of Part III Items

On Part III respondents were asked to rate each of 13 teaching activities used to teach prospective teachers about parents. A five-point scale was used with a rating of 1 indicating low importance and 5 indicating high importance. The mean ratings for all respondents are shown in Table 5, where the activities are ranked with the most important at the top and the least important at the bottom. The mean rating for all items was 3.27.

As shown in Table 5, participation in parent-teacher conferences was

TABLE 4

Respondents' Ratings of Part II Statements
About Providing Parent Involvement Training*

	Item	$\bar{x}$ Rating
1.	Incorporating PIT into an existing course would be more than adequate.	2.45 (Neutral)
2.	PIT should be presented as a core, "theory" course.	2.78 (Neutral)
3.	Student immaturity would prevent a PIT course from being significantly useful at any point in training.	2.99 (Neutral-Disagree)
4.	PIT should be handled by another department.	3.21 (Disagree)
5.	Providing a communication skills training or human relations training would provide all that would be pertinent for PIT.	2.93 (Neutral)
6.	Systematic inservice on PIT should be available for professors.	1.95 (Agree)
7.	PIT should be handled by inservice training for teachers.	2.24 (Neutral)

*1 = strongly agree, 4 = strongly disagree

TABLE 5

Importance Ratings of Various Parent Involvement Training* Activities

(n = 575)

Training Activity		Mean Rating
c.	Participation in parent-teacher conferences	3.75
k.	Interviewing leader of parent organization	3.69
f.	Role plays with teachers or parents	3.65
h.	Bringing a teacher to speak to class	3.54
j.	Bringing a parent to speak to class	3.54
g.	Conducting a parent-teacher conference	3.21
m.	Students evaluating parenting materials	3.18
b.	Pairing students with parent volunteers	3.17
d.	Home visits	3.12
e.	Involvement in community organization	3.09
l.	Each student collecting materials about parents	2.98
a.	Involvement in parent organization	2.90
i.	Writing the family history of a child	2.70

*Rating on scale of 1-5, 1 = low importance and 5 = high importance.

seen as the most important activity used to train teachers in parent involvement. The next most important activities included interviewing leaders of parent organizations, role playing with parents or teachers, having a teacher speak to the class about parent involvement, having a parent speak to the class about parent involvement, and having the student actually conduct a parent-teacher conference. The least important parent involvement training activities included student involvement in parent organizations and having the student write a family history of the child.

E. Part IV of the Questionnaire

1. Responses to Part IV Items

In this section respondents were asked to indicate which of the teaching activities in Part III they actually used in their teaching. Table 6 shows the activities in rank order, from those which were most used to those which were least used. As shown in this table, the most used teaching activities included (1) role-plays with teachers and parents, (2) participating in parent-teacher conferences, (3) pairing students with parent volunteers, and (4) bringing in a teacher to speak about parent-teacher relations. The activities least used by the teacher educators in this survey included (1) field supervisors observing parent conferences lead by the student, (2) students developing a library of materials about parents, (3) students making home visits while student teaching, and (4) students evaluating available parenting materials.

F. Part V of the Questionnaire

1. Responses to Part V

This section of the survey consisted of 19 decision-making issues in the schools. Respondents were asked to indicate whether parents, teachers,

TABLE 6

RANK ORDER OF PARENT INVOLVEMENT TRAINING ACTIVITIES MOST USED BY TEACHER EDUCATORS (PART IV)
(n = 575)

Rank		Item	Percent Who Have Used this Activity
1	f.	Participation in role-plays, or other laboratory exercises involving teachers and parents.	38%
2	c.	Mandatory participation in parent-teacher conferences.	31%
3	b.	Pairing student teachers with parent volunteers.	
	h.	Bringing in a public school teacher as a speaker on parent-teacher relations.	29%
4	i.	Required written family history of a child.	23%
5	j.	Bringing in a parent(s) to class as experts in parent-teacher relations.	19%
6	e.	Required involvement in a community organization where student teaching occurs.	17%
7	k.	Interviewing a parent leader.	16%
8	a.	Requiring student involvement in a parent organization.	15%
9	m.	Having students evaluate parenting materials for content, topic, target group, reading level, etc.	13%
10	d.	Mandatory home-visits while student teaching.	11%
11	l.	Having each student develop a personal library for and about parents.	9%
12	g.	Having field supervisor observe at least two parent conferences led by the student.	7%

or principals should have input or final authority for each decision. Table 7 shows the opinion of the group. In summary, over 50% of these teacher educators felt parents should have input into 16 of the 19 decisions, but final authority on only one: family problems affecting student performance. The majority also felt teachers should have input into 8 of these decisions and final authority on 8 others (16 out of 19 total). They indicated principals should have input on only 5 of the issues and final authority on 5 others (10 out of 19 total). The pattern of these responses suggests the following:

(1) Parents should have input into curriculum and administrative decisions, but very little final authority.

(2) Teachers should have input into administrative decisions and final authority over most curriculum decisions.

(3) Principals should have input into curriculum decisions and final authority on administrative decisions.

For the respondents as a group, the consensus seems to be that parents should be encouraged to participate more in their children's schools, but their participation should consist mainly of providing input for decisions while teachers and administrators retain final authority. Analysis of variance was performed for each of the subgroups in the sample to determine whether there might be response patterns which differed from the group as a whole, or patterns in specific subgroups which differed significantly from the patterns in other subgroups. For this analysis, a mean score for each issue was derived by coding each "input" response as 1 and each "final authority" response as 2. Blank responses were coded as 0. Thus, a low mean score for parents indicates that respondents felt they should have little responsibility in the decision. A high score indicates greater responsibility.

TABLE 7

INPUT AND FINAL RESPONSIBILITY FOR DECISIONS

Decision-Making Issues	Input and Responsibility for Decision		
	Parents	Teachers	Principal
1. Ability grouping for instruction.	P	(T)	PR
2. Homework assignments.	P	(T)	PR
3. Classroom discipline methods.	P	(T)	PR
4. Pupil evaluation.	P	(T)	PR
5. Teaching methods.	P	(T)	PR
6. Selection of textbooks and other learning materials.	P	(T)	PR
7. Degree of emphasis on social skills vs. cognitive skills.	P	(T)	PR
* 8. Placement into Special Education.	P	T	PR
* 9. Emphasis in arts vs. basic skills.	P	T	PR
*10. Emphasis on science vs. social studies.	P	T	PR
11. Hiring/firing school staff.	P	T	(PR)
12. Providing career information.	P	(T)	PR
*13. Sex role/sex education instruction.	P	T	PR
*14. Emphasis on multicultural education.	P	T	PR
15. Promotion and retention standards of students.	P	T	(PR)
16. Desegregation/integration plans.	P	T	(PR)
17. Rotation/assignment of teachers within building.	P	T	(PR)
18. Family problems affecting student performance.	(P)	T	PR
19. Evaluation of school staff.	P	T	(PR)

*Indicates that no group was seen as having final responsibility by 50% of respondents.

( ) Indicates 50% or more of respondents felt this group should have final responsibility.

___ Indicates 50% or more of respondents felt this group should have input to decision.

VI. SUMMARY

A. Conclusions and Recommendations

Both changes in the teacher preparation process and increased levels of parent involvement have been subject to considerable debate in educational circles during the past decade. Those who oppose these two changes seem most concerned about the increased demands both place upon already overburdened teachers. Whereas, those in support of expanding teacher responsibilities to meet the growing demands placed on schools appear to welcome innovative approaches to teacher preparation and to accept parents as partners in the educational process. Regardless of the impact that teacher preparation innovations and parent involvement can have on improving education, effective implementation is complex and calls for a very comprehensive approach.

From the perspectives of teacher educators in the region, there appears to be general support for the concept of parent involvement at the elementary school level. This is evidenced by a majority of them being in favor of (1) increased participation of parents in all school matters, (2) providing teachers with additional training to work with or involve parents, and (3) including parent involvement training as an integral part of the undergraduate elementary teacher education curriculum. In addition, the general perceptions of teacher educators are that parents: (1) do have an interest in their children's schools, (2) have the capability to teach their children at home, and (3) do cooperate with teachers. As might be expected though, those teacher educators who actually teach parent-teacher relations courses are consistently more positive in their feelings about the aforementioned findings than the total respondent group.

Based on these findings, it would appear that teacher educators in the region perceive both the home and school as important institutions in children's development. Further, the implication seems to be that teacher educators are willing to play a major role in lessening the conflict, distrust, and mutual blaming for failure, which has been part of the relationship between these two institutions. Parent involvement training could help teachers better understand the psychological needs of children as well as the cultural context (family, home, community) within which these needs are met so that their efforts to create a learning environment are complementary and continuous rather than contradictory and discontinuous (Cardenas and Zamora, 1980).

The overall responses to Part V of the questionnaire suggest teacher educators view as appropriate parent involvement that which gives parents very little authority in making school decisions. Instead, it appears they prefer to allow parents to have more input into such decisions, but not any power in the decision-making process. The concept of shared decision making in schools continues to be a provocative issue. However, increasingly complex approaches to educating children and changing family structures/ lifestyles present clear challenges to the school and home. In order to meet these challenges and resolve their attendant problems, it seems that more involvement and cooperation is necessary between parents and schools.

As Cardenas and Zamora (1980) conclude, families and schools need to heed the warnings, then accept the challenge to work together in creating compatible environments where children may feel secure and loved, and where they can develop positive self concepts. Preparing elementary teachers for this kind of involvement appears to be most appropriate during

their undergraduate training, when they form their professional identity as educators.

Teacher educators in the region appear to favor the general concept of parent involvement in the schools, but seem to prefer the type of parent involvement which fits the Family Impact Model. The goal of this type of parent involvement is to do something to or for the family as a means of helping the child at school. Specific objectives which might be subsumed under this broad goal include: (1) providing parent training in the areas of discipline or behavior management, (2) teaching parents to become home tutors with their children, (3) enlisting the support of parents in seeing that homework is completed, and (4) teaching parents about issues of child development or mental health. In each of these activities, the role of the teacher is basically to inform parents about ways they can improve their parenting skills. This appears to imply that the teacher needs (1) some skills in teaching or working with adults and (2) some knowledge about specific instructional materials.

If the Family Impact Model is used to guide parent involvement training for prospective teachers, the implications appear to be relatively clear: (1) prospective teachers should have some coursework related to working with or involving adults (i.e., parents), and (2) they should have courses which provide knowledge, understanding and expertise with respect to the skills parents need to work with their children and otherwise be involved in school matters. In order to identify these specific skills, there must be greater clarity about the specific objectives desired in working with or involving parents.

In a broader context, there seems to be several possibilities for

including parent involvement training as part of the undergraduate curriculum for elementary teacher education majors. One of the more innovative approaches appears to be offered by Friedman, Brinlee and Hayes (1980). They discuss eight new cognate areas, one of which is entitled, "Home-School Relations." Upon completion of this cognate area, as proposed, prospective teachers will have become aware of family dynamics and their influence on children's development.

One of the courses suggested was "Parental Involvement in Education," which would examine various aspects of parent involvement/education programs. This concept tends to be supported by teacher educators who mostly agree that parent involvement training should be presented as a core "theory" course, if mandated for undergraduates in elementary education. Thus, it would appear that while there are few required experiences which promote home-school understanding and cooperation with respect to educating children, the potential exists for providing meaningful experiences in undergraduate training of elementary teachers. This potential is enhanced further by what appears to be teacher educators' recognition of the importance of parent involvement training experiences for prospective teachers and their willingness to provide them under the appropriate circumstances.

In order for schooling to become more relevant and effective, the distance that has developed and now widely exists between home and school must be sharply reduced. Given that teacher educators are aware of this problem and indicate a willingness to help resolve it, the undergraduate preparation of prospective teachers appears to be one of the logical places to intervene. The intervention strategy would take the form of parent involvement training coursework and related field experiences.

One basic premise of such training is that schools who have major responsibility for providing primary and secondary education for citizens of the nation, must provide experiences which are cognizant of and take into account the learners' total life space (i.e., home, family, community, and school). A second basic premise is that parents, through a range of involvement activities, can be very valuable and effective partners in the education of children.

Based upon results from this study, two general recommendations are offered:

1. That the base of knowledge regarding parent involvement training for undergraduates in elementary education be expanded to include the perspectives of teachers, principals, and parents of elementary school students. This would provide a more complete description of how such training could be planned and implemented.
2. That pilot studies be undertaken which attempt to explore practical methods and the feasibility of changing undergraduate curriculum experiences to include parent involvement training for prospective teachers. This could help understand how such changes in teacher preparation could be made and help break down the resistance of teacher preparation to change, expecially that deemed relevant for meeting new challenges to education.

B. A Framework for Future Research on Parent Involvement

This initial survey of one of the stakeholder groups affected by

parent involvement tends to provide insights regarding the political aspects of involving parents in the schools. As with any other relationship which involves sharing power, the participants involved must each receive some benefit in exchange for some of their power. When either feels their benefits are not adequate, they can be expected to either ask for more or to reduce their participation in the venture.

To be most effective, parent involvement must be a joint venture that includes parents, teachers, and administrators, specifically; and less directly--teacher educators. In order to assure full participation of all groups, a clear definition of "parent involvement" must be agreed upon and the specific roles of each group must be spelled out. Parent involvement in the schools depends upon the participation of all three of the major groups mentioned above, so the definition of parent involvement must be one which is acceptable and beneficial to all three. Meaningful research in this area must include the perspective of all three groups and must clearly define what is meant by "parent involvement."

To clarify future research in this area, a useful framework has been developed by the Parent Involvement Project (Sowers, et al, 1980). The framework indicates that parent involvement can mean parents participating as:

an audience for schools
home tutors
program supporters (volunteers)
paid staff
co-learners (parent training, inservice)
decision makers (instructional plans, school policy)
advocates (initiating systemic change)

This framework views parent involvement as a multi-level concept. Involvement may range from signing a report card to making decisions about school

policy. The recent research literature suggests at least these seven types of parent involvement, each of which differs in terms of responsibility and in terms of authority. Thus, it is possible to favor parent involvement (meaning volunteers in the classroom) and at the same time to oppose parent involvement (meaning parents making school policy decisions). A framework such as this should be used to construct other survey instruments in studying parent involvement.

Within each level of parent involvement in the framework, there are specific issues which must be explored in order to understand how parent involvement works at that particular level. Many of these issues are relevant to one level but not to the others, so it is necessary to explore each level individually. In addition, there are some issues within each level which are more critical than others, so these should be explored first; for example, if neither teachers nor the parents wish to have volunteers in the classroom, it is not necessary to determine whether or not the parents have the necessary skills. This logical order of issues should determine the sequence in which they are studied.

By deciding the specific level of parent involvement to be studied, and by sequencing the issues in terms of their priority, one can modify the framework to look at any aspect of parent involvement training from the perspective of each stakeholder group (parents, teachers, administrators, etc.).

C. Directions for Future Research

One of the most important stakeholder groups to survey is that of teachers in elementary schools. The next study in this series will ask for their opinions about the desirability of each level of parent involvement,

their assessment of the extent to which their opinions about parent involvement are reflected in current practice, and their recommendations about the skills teachers should have to facilitate parent involvement at the various levels. This information will be compared with the information from teacher educators to identify the issues on which there is consensus between trainers and practitioners. These areas of consensus will provide clear implications for revising the teacher training curriculum with regard to parent involvement.

Another important stakeholder group is that of elementary school principals. A survey is being planned which will ask them also to identify what they think is desirable in terms of parent involvement, to indicate the extent to which this is achieved in their schools, and to suggest specific teacher competencies which would help attain that level of parent involvement in the schools. Their responses will be compared to both the responses of the teachers and to those of the teacher educators in elementary education to further describe the areas of consensus and of conflict.

As each new stakeholder group is surveyed, more information is available with which to describe needed teacher competencies for working with and involving parents. Each new group should supply additional ideas about the best ways to include these competencies in teacher training. In comparing the responses of the various groups, the areas of conflict serve to indicate those areas in which the opposition of one group may effectively prevent the curriculum changes others feel are needed. In these areas, some political consensus building may have to precede any attempt to alter the training curriculum. Those areas on which the stakeholder groups agree serve as indicators of areas where curriculum changes might be planned, and

successfully implemented more immediately. These areas of consensus also point out areas in which members of the stakeholder groups might work together to promote parent involvement in the schools.

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